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# Enhancing the Depiction of a Prophet: The Repercussions of Textual Criticism for the Study of the Elisha Cycle<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Introduction

Textual criticism and its connections to the literary- and redaction-critical method have recently become increasingly discussed topics in biblical scholarship.<sup>2</sup> It has been correctly emphasized by multiple scholars that literary criticism cannot be conducted without a meticulous study of textual variants of the text. Without text-historical considerations one runs into the methodological hazard of using the very *latest* textual version to study the redactional origins of such passages.<sup>3</sup> It is therefore increasingly important that the many versions of the Hebrew Bible are taken seriously in literary-critical scholarship. The most important of these witnesses is the Septuagint (LXX). As in the case of the book of Jeremiah,<sup>4</sup> so too in the books of Kings, the LXX has a considerably different textual layout when compared to the MT edition of the book.<sup>5</sup>

While the many textual differences between the LXX and MT in Kings have often been thought to have been introduced by either the Greek

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<sup>1</sup> I want to thank my co-participants of the University of Helsinki Text-Critical Study Group (Ossi Arpe, Paavo Huotari, Ville Mäkipelto, and Miika Tucker) and Tuukka Kauhanen for their valuable input when writing this article.

<sup>2</sup> For extensive discussion, see the many articles in the recent volumes of Müller / Pakkala (eds.), *Insights; Person / Rezetko, Models*. See also Tekoniemi, *Game*, 5-39.

<sup>3</sup> For instance Brooke, *Editing*, 27, maintains: “In the light of the scrolls from the Qumran caves it has become increasingly clear that it is no longer appropriate to distinguish sharply between the practices of text criticism and those other approaches that might be deemed as forms of so-called higher criticism to reveal the literary character of texts. Textual variants are not to be described solely in terms of scribal errors, but more often reflect editorial intervention in the transmission of texts.” Similarly Aejmelaeus, *Text*. See also the discussion of Mäkipelto, *Editing*, 4-15.296-299.

<sup>4</sup> It is now commonly held in the scholarship that the significantly shorter LXX edition of Jeremiah is in fact earlier in its textual form and composition; see, for instance, Tov, *History*, 211-237.

<sup>5</sup> For a concise discussion of the differences between the MT and LXX in Kings, see Tov, *Criticism*, 306-309.

translator or a later Greek reviser, it is nowadays clear that no “Greek reviser,” and particularly the Old Greek (OG) translator, would have produced such deviations from the MT text form as witnessed by the LXX.<sup>6</sup> Such an argument may have been possible (albeit even then not very tenable) prior to the Qumran finds, but after the unearthing of the massive textual plurality in the Dead Sea Scrolls, this view has also become obsolete in the case of Samuel-Kings. The translator of these books was overall very faithful to the underlying Hebrew *Vorlage*, and thus the differences now found vis-à-vis the MT must have been extant already in the Hebrew text of the translator. Indeed, one of the greatest challenges for the textual criticism of the LXX in Samuel-Kings currently is that in the textual history the complete opposite happened, i.e., the so-called *kaige* revision. This Hebraizing revision was done in the last centuries BCE and the first centuries CE, and it strived to harmonize the Greek text with that of the proto-MT.<sup>7</sup> As all known Greek manuscripts of Kings have been influenced by *kaige* to at least some degree, in many cases the OG text has likely been lost.<sup>8</sup> However, in some cases (as will be seen below) the original LXX text can still be indirectly found in the Old Latin (VL) translation(s), and especially in the 5<sup>th</sup> century manuscript *Palimpsestus Vindobonensis* (La<sup>115</sup>).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The translator of Kings was very literal, and usually even follows the Hebrew word order – it is very unlikely that such a translator would have made large-scale transpositions, for instance. For further discussion, see Mäkipelto / Tekoniemi / Tucker, Transposition.

<sup>7</sup> In the books of Kings, the *kaige* portion consists of 1Kgs 1,1-2, 11 and 1Kgs 22-2Kgs. The name *kaige* comes from the idiosyncratic rendition of Hebrew קני as *και γε* in Greek. The revision was so named by Barthélemy, the one who identified the revision; see Barthélemy, *Devanciers*. It has recently been noted that *kaige* was not a uniform “movement,” but rather a more or less sporadic *tendency* to harmonize the textual forms, and even done over several centuries. For further information on the *kaige* revision, see Aitken, *Origins*, 21-40; McLean, *Kaige*; Gentry, *Translations*.

<sup>8</sup> It has often been stated in earlier scholarship that the Antiochian / Lucianic text escaped the *kaige* influence. However, it is now clear that this was not the case – the *L* text may have escaped some or even most of the *kaige* influence, but certainly not all of it. Similarly also Aejmelaesus, *History*, 169: “The Lucianic text has often been said to be ‘untouched by the Kaige recension’... This does not, however, seem to be totally accurate. At several points, acquaintance with the Kaige text is obvious...”. The textual situation of *L* is of course even more complex because of the many Lucianic and Hexaplaric readings in it. See Tekoniemi, *Game*, 14-25, for further discussion.

<sup>9</sup> See Fischer, *Palimpsestus*, 13-87, for an edition of the manuscript. For more systematic studies of the manuscript’s text, see Kauhanen, *Problem*, 139-164

In this article, eight different textual cases in 2 Kings (in 2Kgs 2,14; 3,14; 4,4.41; 5,18; 8,11; 13,14-21; 13,21)<sup>10</sup> will be analyzed. These cases all point in the same direction, namely that the proto-MT text has gone through a theologically / ideologically motivated revision concerning the emerging picture of the prophet Elisha. While in the OG text form Elisha is still a much more nuanced and ambivalent character, capable even of grave failures, in the MT the prophet is now notably more coherently blameless – just as the student of Elijah, the greatest Israelite prophet to have ever lived, would surely have been expected to be. This in turn has direct consequences for the literary-redaction critical analysis of the Elisha cycle, as this method has traditionally sorely overlooked the readings of the LXX.<sup>11</sup> As the text of the LXX appears older than the MT, the future literary-redaction critical scholarship on these passages should thus be done on the basis of the text of the LXX.

## 2. Analyses of the Individual Cases

### 2.1 Dividing the Waters of Jordan (2Kgs 2,14)

After the story of Elijah's ascension culminates with his being taken up to heaven in a whirlwind (2Kgs 2,11-12), his pupil Elisha picks up the mantle of Elijah and heads back to the Jordan (2Kgs 2,13-14).<sup>12</sup> There he parts the waters by striking them with his master's mantle, calls to Yahweh, and crosses the river.

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(1Sam); Tekoniemi, Stratum, 1-16 (1Kgs); Tekoniemi, Readings, 1-14 (2Kgs). Both Tekoniemi and Kauhanen have emphasized the high reliability of the manuscript's textual form.

<sup>10</sup> To this list one may add the three smaller cases (2Kgs 2,23; 4,7; 8,10) also discussed in notes 43, 49, and 69 of this article. The textual changes in 2Kgs 2,23 and 8,10 (and also in 4,41) are technically quite close to the rabbinic exegetical devices of *tiqqune sopherim* (addition of a vowel, metathesis); see McCarthy, *Tiqqune*.

<sup>11</sup> Recently, for instance, Bodner, *Elisha's Profile*, as well as Bergen, *Elisha*, appear to make minimal use of the Septuagint altogether. In this context, one has to commend Gilmour, *Juxtaposition*, for clearly taking the Septuagint and its textual peculiarities seriously – however, none of the textual cases to be discussed in this article have been analyzed by Gilmour.

<sup>12</sup> It is likely that the highly repetitious verse 13 is a later addition to the story via *Wiederaufnahme*, as the verse repeats almost verbatim the text of 2Kgs 2,14. Accordingly, the Peshitta lacks the whole of v.14aα and begins the verse straight from Elisha's summons. This shows well that the story in question has indeed attracted later revisers.

MT	A and B	Rahlfs (= rel)	L-700 <sup>13</sup>
וַיִּקַּח תִּהְיֶה אֵלָיו מַעֲלִי וַיִּפֹּק וַיִּבֶקַּח אֶת־הַמָּיִם	καὶ ἔλαβεν τὴν μῆλωτὴν Ἡλίου ἢ ἔπεσεν ἐπάνωθεν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐπάταξεν τὸ ὕδωρ	καὶ ἔλαβεν τὴν μῆλωτὴν Ἡλίου ἢ ἔπεσεν ἐπάνωθεν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐπάταξεν τὸ ὕδωρ καὶ οὐ διέστη καὶ εἶπεν ποῦ	καὶ ἔλαβεν ὁ Ελισαιε τὴν μῆλωτὴν Ἡλίου τὴν πεσοῦσαν ἐπάνωθεν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐπάταξεν τὰ ὕδατα <sup>15</sup> καὶ οὐ διηρέθη <sup>16</sup> καὶ εἶπεν Ελισαιε ποῦ (δὴ L- <sup>19</sup> ) ἐστὶν
וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יְהוָה אֵלֶיךָ אֲלֵיךָ אֶת־הוּא	καὶ εἶπεν ποῦ (A: κύριος) <sup>14</sup> ὁ θεὸς Ἡλίου αφφω καὶ ἐπάταξεν τὰ ὕδατα καὶ διερράγησαν ἐνθα καὶ ἐνθα	ὁ θεὸς Ἡλίου αφφω καὶ ἐπάταξεν τὰ ὕδατα καὶ διερράγησαν ἐνθα καὶ ἐνθα	ὁ θεὸς Ἡλίου αφφω (> 82; sub* 127) καὶ οὗτος 93-127/οὕτως 19'-700 ἐπάταξεν τὰ ὕδατα (93-127*) καὶ διηρέθη (93-127*)  καὶ ἐπάταξεν Ελισαιε τὰ ὕδατα ἐκ δευτέρου καὶ διηρέθη τὰ ὕδατα καὶ διήλθε διὰ ξηρᾶς <sup>17</sup>
וַיַּעֲבֹר אֶלְיָשָׁע׃	καὶ διέβη Ελισαιε	καὶ διέβη Ελισαιε	
And he took the mantle of Elijah, which had fallen from		And he took the mantle of Elijah, which had fallen from him, and hit the water(s).	

<sup>13</sup> The Lucianic text has multiple clearly recensional Lucianic readings, such as explications of subject (Ελισαιε *tris*), verb of being (ἐστὶν), stylistic enhancement (τὴν πεσοῦσαν, δὴ), and harmonizations (τὰ ὕδατα, διηρέθη).

<sup>14</sup> The plus is also found in manuscripts 247, *CII*, 119, 121, s<sup>-64</sup> 130, and the Syrohexapla, but not in codex B. The reading is likely Hexaplaric, showing that the OG (and likely even *kaige*) did not yet have this word in its *Vorlage*. The addition could well be a proto-Masoretic Yahwistic explication.

<sup>15</sup> In plural also in manuscripts 106 and 158.

<sup>16</sup> Also in manuscripts 119 and 460. Likely a harmonization towards 2Kgs 2,8.

<sup>17</sup> This reading is also attested by manuscripts 64<sup>ms</sup>-381, 460, and La<sup>M</sup>: *Et transiit per siccum in eremo*, and may thus be proto-Lucianic. The term “proto-Lucianic reading” is often used as a synonym for an OG reading (especially in the context of 2Kgs). However, this term is more precisely to be taken as simply denoting a (pre-Lucianic) reading that was extant in the base text of the Lucianic reviser(s), whether OG or not. Not all readings in this text form may have been original OG readings – at least some corruption (accidental mistakes, pluses / minuses of varying length, etc.) must have taken place. Proto-Lucianic readings could therefore be divided in two groups: the original OG readings and proto-Lucianic secondary readings.

him, and smote the waters,  and said: “Where is Yahweh, the God of Elijah – even he?” And he smote the waters, and they divided hither and thither,  and Elisha crossed them.	<u>But it did not part.</u> And he said: “Where is the god of Elijah <i>affō</i> ?” And (+ this/thus <i>L</i> ) smote the water(s), and they divided = hither and thither. (Rahlfs) = and Elisha hit the waters for a second time and the waters divided. ( <i>L</i> ) And he went through the dry land.
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There are some text-critical problems in the verse, some extant already in the MT: the peculiar אֶת־הַיָּרְדֵּן is an old *crux interpretum* since it is not completely certain whether it should be taken as a part of the exclamation of Elisha (“Where is Yahweh, God of Elijah, *even He*?”), “*even He*” referring thus to Yahweh. The Hebrew אֶת־הַיָּרְדֵּן could also be understood as beginning the next clause (“*Even he* [= Elisha or Elijah] smote the water ...”). The longer *L* text seems to understand the text exactly in this light with its doublet: “And he said: ‘Where is the God of Elijah, *affō*, he also hit the waters, and they parted!’ And Elisha hit the waters for the second time, and the waters parted.” The *L* text has come to be as a conflation of the OG and some kind of harmonization towards one of the possible understandings of the MT.<sup>18</sup> The expression אֶת־הַיָּרְדֵּן could even be a gloss.<sup>19</sup> In any case, the MT now has in its text only one long “ritual,” consisting of hitting, exclaiming, hitting again, and finally the waters parting.

The Greek witnesses, apart from the likely Hexaplaric plus οὗτος/-ως of *L*-<sup>82</sup>,<sup>20</sup> simply transcribe the expression as αφφω, which, however, likely had as its *Vorlage* not אֶת־הַיָּרְדֵּן, but אִתּוֹ “then,” as is shown by 2Kgs 10,10 where the same Greek transcription αφφω is found.<sup>21</sup> This underlying Hebrew

<sup>18</sup> Thus also Rahlfs, Lucians Rezension, 268-270, who classifies *L* in this verse under “Sonstige erklärliche Änderungen.”

<sup>19</sup> Thus Stade, Books, 183; Fricke, Buch, 26.

<sup>20</sup> While Treballe Barrera, Readings, 130-131, seems to argue that οὗτος is the OG reading, this does not seem likely since, first of all, the reading is found under an asterisk in 93-127, indicating its late origin. Second, while οὗτως in 19'-700 is likely a corruption of οὗτος, this reading could even be derived from Aquila (α' που κς ο θς ηλια καιπερ αυτος). This plus may also be a simple Lucianic recensional explication among many others (see note 13 above).

<sup>21</sup> It is not completely clear, however, whether the case of 2Kgs 10,10 is due to the original translation or the *kaige* revision since αφφω is lacking there in *L* and the VL manuscript La<sup>115</sup>. In 2Kgs 10,10 the textual situation of both of these witnesses is somewhat problematic; for discussion of this passage, see Tekoniemi, Readings, 4-5.

reading would make better sense in the context since the Hebrew construction  $\text{הַיָּהּ} + \text{אֵלֹהִים}$  is used three times to pose an emphasized question elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>22</sup> The text would thus translate as “*Where then* is the God of Elijah?”<sup>23</sup> The original expression  $\text{אֵלֹהִים}$  was therefore probably somehow corrupted into the  $\text{אֱלֹהֵי}$  of the MT.<sup>24</sup>

This text-critical solution to the old problem brings us to the second, literary, problem of the MT: if  $\text{אֱלֹהֵי}$  – or rather,  $\text{אֵלֹהִים}$  – is not to be read as beginning the following clause, why does Elisha seem to strike the water ( $\text{וַיִּכֶּה אֶת־הַמַּיִם}$ ) *twice*, both before and after the exclamation? Nothing in the text seems to warrant this second action. This syntactically and narratologically strange duplication has been argued to be based on literary-critical reasons: Elisha’s exclamation has been added to the text via *Wiederaufnahme* (resumptive repetition).<sup>25</sup> While these reconstructions and emendations of the MT are possible, there is another possible way of resolving the problem with the help of the text of the LXX.

Not much interest has been shown in the reading of the LXX, where it is in fact noted that, after the first hit, the waters  $\text{οὐ διεΐσθη}$  “did *not* part.”<sup>26</sup> Interestingly enough, only the Greek codices A and B lack this mention, due to Hebraizing Hexaplaric and/or *kaige* influence.<sup>27</sup> This OG reading is usually passed over in silence, or it is explained as an exegetical or even as somehow “midrashic” interpretation of the text.<sup>28</sup> This is of course one of the completely viable options: a later reviser (likely already in Hebrew) saw

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Judg 9,38; Job 17,15; Isa 19,12. In Hos 13,10  $\text{אֵלֹהִים}$  is also once combined with  $\text{הַיָּהּ}$ .

<sup>23</sup> Similarly Ehrlich, Randglossen, 281-282.

<sup>24</sup> Similarly Stipp, Elischa, 50. Bergen, Elisha, 64, notes the problems of the passage, but still retains the MT.

<sup>25</sup> Hentschel, Könige, 10: “Ursprünglich schlug Elischa mit dem Mantel nur einmal ... Ein Bearbeiter fügte die Frage nach dem Gott des Elija ein, um den Anschein zu vermeiden, als ob der Mantel magisch gewirkt hatte.”

<sup>26</sup> The reading is also attested by numerous Vulgate manuscripts and the Ethiopic and Coptic translations, showing that the reading is indeed a very ancient and reliable one. On the other hand, this wide attestation of the OG reading makes it likely that the reading of the MT is of very late origin, possibly one of *the* latest proto-Masoretic changes to the text.

<sup>27</sup> It is also possible that the two (or either of them) manuscripts have simply lost the reading independently of one another via *homoiooteleuton* ( $\text{καὶ } 3^\circ \cap 4^\circ$ ) and / or the influence of either Hebraizing revision.

<sup>28</sup> Stade, Books, 183: “S<sup>L</sup> gives a midrashic transformation of the verse.” Treballe Barrera, Centena, 160-163, who notes that this is the OG reading, nevertheless does not discuss the reading further. Even Stipp, Elischa, 49-61, passes over this reading completely.

the repetition of וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הַמַּיִם and concluded that on the first hit the waters simply must not have parted, thus adding the plus.

However, one must ask whether this is the likeliest option, since this plus actually adds another, and in fact quite crucial, literary-critical and narratological problem to the text: was Elisha thus not mighty enough to part the waters by himself, as his master Elijah had been (2Kgs 2:8)? Did he therefore not inherit the powers of Elijah “in double” (פִּי־שְׁנַיִם)<sup>29</sup> as he had asked of him a few verses earlier (2Kgs 2,9-10)? In the LXX this seems to indeed be the case: only after calling to “the God of Elijah” do the waters part – Elisha, even with the mantle of his master,<sup>30</sup> is not able to perform the miracle on his own. He is apparently not even *as* mighty as his master, let alone twice as powerful.<sup>31</sup> It is quite unlikely that any “midrashic” interpreter would have made such a problematic change to the text. In the MT, however, the situation is of course completely different: Elisha seems to become powerful enough to perform the miracle by himself, even making the prophetic bet of Elijah come true, as argued by many.<sup>32</sup>

Indeed, the prophetic “bet” of Elijah in 2Kgs 2,10 – namely that Elisha will inherit the powers of his master only if he sees him ascend to heaven – makes much more sense in the LXX version since there is a slight conflict between the master and his overconfident pupil. Elijah knew that he would win his own bet – why else would he have made such a cryptic promise in the first place, were he able (or rather, willing) to fulfil Elisha’s wish? In the MT this conflict is nowhere to be found – Elijah’s bet becomes the last

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<sup>29</sup> While the phrase פִּי־שְׁנַיִם is quite rare (elsewhere only in Deut 17,6; 21,17; Zech 13,8) and thus debatable in its interpretation, it seems the most natural interpretation to consider the phrase somehow denoting “doubleness” – especially in the context of Elijah’s response. The same idea of a “double share” as the firstborn’s rightful portion is found in Deut 21,17 as well (and thus also translated by the LXX as διπλά).

<sup>30</sup> The ineffectiveness of the mantle, unlike in the MT, also shows that there were no inherent magical qualities in the mantle, and that the only reason for its ineffectiveness was Elisha’s incompetence. This could also be interpreted in two ways when it comes to Elijah’s prophetic prowess: on one hand, it goes to show that Elijah himself was in no need of magical objects, but, on the other, it could also be seen as an indication of Elijah not being mighty enough to “leave a mark” on his own mantle. This second interpretation may also have been a contributing factor in the workings of the proto-MT scribe.

<sup>31</sup> This interpretation is still possible even on the basis of the MT’s text, as shown by Brueggeman, Kings, 297: “... unlike Elijah in v. 8, his first striking is not effective and he must do it twice. Thus his power may be less than that of Elijah.”

<sup>32</sup> See, e.g., Hobbs, Kings, 22; Long, Kings, 31-32.



mystical deed of the greatest prophet Israel had ever seen, but, at the same time, the narrative loses much of its aforementioned psychological tension. It is thus safe to assume that Elisha did not originally inherit his master's powers in double and did not see Elijah taken to heaven – as is in fact related by 2Kgs 2,12, “and he saw him no more” (וְלֹא רָאָהוּ עוֹד). As argued by Ehrlich, the exclamation of Elisha (especially when read with the emphasizing אַפּוֹא of the LXX) is indeed to be read as a sign of deep anxiety, arising from the realization that his wish had not been fulfilled.<sup>33</sup>

It makes much more sense that the text would have been changed from the LXX version, which paints the image of Elisha in a much darker tone, to that of the MT, where the revered prophet is made more powerful. The MT would have omitted this ideologically quite problematic idea from the text (reading \*וְלֹא הִצִּי), leaving however the now strange repetition of וַיִּכֶּה אֶת-הַמַּיִם in the text. In fact, the challenging MT reading אֶף-הִדּוּא may also be explainable on this line of argument: on the one hand the change omits the emphasis (אַפּוֹא) of Elisha's question, and on the other hand it could be understood as an attempt to alleviate the problems born from the double mention of Elisha hitting the water. The use of the particle אֶף here could even be understood as simply denoting a reference to the first hitting (“indeed, he had hit the water”), thus making possible the interpretation that, in fact, there was only one strike to begin with.<sup>34</sup> However one wants to solve this mystery, the problematic grammar of the second verb וַיִּכֶּה still remains, betraying the editorial intrusions to the MT.

## 2.2 2 Kings 3,14 – Did Elisha Revere an Evil Omride King?

The second ideologically motivated difference between the two Elisha traditions is to be found in 2Kgs 3, and especially in verse 3,14, where Elisha is said to “hold in high reverence” the king of Judah. In the MT and the majority of Greek witnesses (= *kaige*) the Judahite king mentioned in chapter 3 is Jehoshaphat, who indeed “did what was right in the eyes of Yahweh” (MT 1Kgs 22,43 par. LXX 16,28b). However, in the OG version, preserved only in *L*, the king of Judah is Ahazyah, whose mother was Athaliah, daughter of Omri / Ahab, who “did evil in the eyes of the Lord”

<sup>33</sup> See Ehrlich, Randglossen, 281-282: “Danach ist der Sinn hier der: Elia hat mich verlassen, aber wo bleibt auch JHVH, der Gott Elias? hat auch er mich verlassen?”

<sup>34</sup> Translated by both Hentschel, Könige, 10, and Rehm, Buch, 28, as “when”: “als er auf das Wasser schlug”; similarly Jones, Kings, 387: “and when he also had smitten.”

(2Kgs 8,27).<sup>35</sup> Elisha’s revering an evil king with Omride parentage is ideologically quite an awkward reading in this context, especially since just before in 2Kgs 3:13 Elisha had refused his help to Joram, king of Israel, who was an evil son of Ahab. It is likely that a proto-MT reviser, considering the problematic ideological repercussions of this reading, changed the Judahite king of 2Kgs 3 from Ahazyah to Jehoshaphat, a pious reformer of Yahwistic faith. The opposite, namely, a change from the MT form, creating grave ideological problems in the OG, is highly unlikely.<sup>36</sup>

This change of name is linked to another textual difference between the MT and the OG. The location of Jehoshaphat’s regnal narrative, found in the MT in 1Kgs 22,41-51, is in the OG located already after verse 16,28 (customarily marked as 16,28a-h). This transposition also has chronological repercussions, as in the OG Jehoshaphat accedes to the throne already during Omri’s twelfth year, not in Ahab’s second year as in the MT.

Table 1. Placement of Jehoshaphat’s reign in OG, MT, and *kaige* editions of 1 Kings

OG (L)	MT	<i>Kaige</i> -text (B)
Omri (16,23-28)	Omri (16,23-28)	Omri (16,23-28)
<i>Jehoshaphat (16,28a -h)</i>		<i>Jehoshaphat (16,28a-h)</i>
Ahab (16,29-22,40)	Ahab (16,29-22,40)	Ahab (16,29-22,40)
	<i>Jehoshaphat (22,41-51)</i>	<i>Jehoshaphat (22,41-46.51 kaige revision)</i>
Ahazyah (22,52ff.)	Ahazyah (22,52ff.)	Ahazyah (22,52ff.)

Thus, the reigns of Jehoshaphat and Joram do not in fact converge in the OG chronology, unlike now in the MT. Thus, if the MT is indeed later with its identification of the Judahite king as Jehoshaphat, a simple change of the name would not have sufficed here since a change to the more original OG chronology was also in order. The reviser was thus forced to change the chronology and the textual order of the passages as well in order to make

<sup>35</sup> See Shenkel, *Chronology*, 87-108, for a detailed discussion of this phenomenon. The VL witness La<sup>M</sup> also gives the name as Ahazyah in 2Kgs 3,9.

<sup>36</sup> Similarly Schenker, *Textgeschichte*, 96-97. It is also good to note that in 2Kgs 4,13 and 8,4 – not to mention 13,14-20 – Elisha seems to be on quite good terms with the (anonymous) king(s) of Israel (both of whom must have been Omrides), showing that there are also similar cases elsewhere in the text and that originally the picture of Elisha was much more nuanced. Indeed, it has been proposed by numerous scholars that the “king of Israel” in the Elisha stories was originally anonymous everywhere and was only secondarily identified during the transmission process; see Klostermann, *Bücher*, 398; Stade, *Books*, 186-187; Gray, *Kings*, 432-434; Miller, *Elisha*, 442; Shenkel, *Chronology*, 100; Würthwein, *Bücher*, 282; McKenzie, *Trouble*, 97.

this ideological correction.<sup>37</sup> Another sign of the lateness of the textual form of the MT vis-à-vis the OG is the fact that MT 2Kgs 2, which tells the story of Elijah’s ascension, is in fact situated outside the bounds of any regnal narrative, which breaks the narrative-compositional rules of the books of Kings. This is likely due to the abovementioned chronological changes to its text. This is in fact not the only time the MT evidences this narratological difficulty: Elisha’s death narrative is also similarly out of regnal bounds in the MT and most of the Septuagint tradition (see below). Thus, interestingly enough, both the beginning and ending stories of Elisha’s prophetic career are now found outside regnal bounds in the MT. As will be seen, this is hardly a coincidence.

### 2.3 Can Inexhaustible Oil Be Exhausted? (2Kgs 4:4-6)<sup>38</sup>

In 2Kgs 4,4, *L* attests a short plus, “and it (= the oil) will not stop,” in Elisha’s prophecy to a certain wife of the sons of prophets. This plus is also supported by some other Greek manuscripts, mostly from the ungrouped (*mixti*) manuscripts, reading “and it *you* will not stop.” Interestingly enough, this information appears to be in contradiction to the mention in verse 6, where the oil does indeed stop (יִשְׁטֹם הַמָּשֶׁה וְיִכָּשֶׁה).

MT	Rahlfs	<i>L</i>
וּבָא וְנָסַח הַדֶּלֶת בְּעַדָּךְ וּבְעַד־בְּנֶיךָ וְיָצְאָה עַל כָּל־הַכִּלִּים הָאֵלֶּה	καὶ εἰσελεύσῃ καὶ ἀποκλείσεις τὴν θύραν κατὰ σοῦ καὶ κατὰ τῶν υἱῶν σου καὶ ἀποχεεῖς εἰς τὰ σκεύη ταῦτα	καὶ εἰσελεύσῃ καὶ ἀποκλείσεις τὴν θύραν ἐπὶ σεαυτὴν καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ τέκνα σου <sup>39</sup> καὶ ἔχχεῖς εἰς τὰ ἀγγεῖα ταῦτα καὶ αὐτὸ οὐκ ἀποστήσεται καὶ τὸ πληρωθὲν ἀρείς
הַמִּלְאָה תִּשָּׁפֵי: e[is] + παντα A, 247, 488   ἀρείς] + και αυτο ουκ αποστησεις 56, 55, 71, 158, 244 <sup>mg</sup> , 245, 342, 707	καὶ τὸ πληρωθὲν ἀρείς	
MT/Rahlfs: And you shall go in and shut the door behind yourself and your sons,		<i>L</i> : And you shall go in and shut the door on yourself and your children,

<sup>37</sup> Apart from the chronology, the MT has probably also made a slight compensatory revision in 1Kgs 22,50 where an originally anonymous “king of Israel” (OG) has been identified as Ahazyah (MT). For further discussion, see Mäkipelto / Tekoniemi / Tucker, Transposition, 6-9.

<sup>38</sup> I want to thank Julio Treballe Barrera for bringing this case to my attention.

<sup>39</sup> The Lucianic reviser appears to have worked on this verse independently, as ἐπὶ σεαυτὴν καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ τέκνα σου appears to be Lucianic stylizing, similar to the change from σκεύη to ἀγγεῖα. Thus, one could argue that the plus might also go back to some similar recensional reworking.

and you shall pour in (+ all MT) these vessels, and that which is full you shall set aside.	and you shall pour out in these containers, <u>and it will not stop</u> , and that which is filled you shall set aside.
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This textual difference has not elicited much discussion in scholarship, and, in the few cases where it has been noted, the *L* plus has been condemned as a late (Lucianic) gloss-like addition.<sup>40</sup> While this is not impossible, it is hard to see why *L* would have introduced a contradictory statement into the text against verse 6 since *L* usually strives to omit such logical contradictions. Also, the witness of the Greek *mixti* manuscripts makes it likely that this plus is not solely due to Lucianic revision, but is, at the very least, a potentially Hexaplaric reading.<sup>41</sup> The majority text corresponds to the shorter MT due to *kaige*.

In this case, however, the *L* plus has a very good chance of being the OG and the oldest text attainable, going back to a Hebrew *Vorlage* (\* והוא לא יעמד).<sup>42</sup> It is important to note that the minus of the MT actually removes the possibility of the interpretation of a slight (ideo)logical incongruity from the text: the prophetic words of Elisha do not seem to completely align with the outcome, the cessation of oil in verse 6. Of course, the text of *L* does not *need* to be interpreted as including an ideological contradiction, since the phrase “and it will not stop” quite clearly indicates that the oil will simply keep running only while the wife keeps filling the vessels. In this way the story clearly parallels the Elijah narrative in 1Kgs 17,14.16, where the oil is similarly said not to stop before the drought is over.<sup>43</sup> From the “proto-

<sup>40</sup> Stade, Books, 190: “S<sup>L</sup> has the foolish addition και αυτο ουκ αποστησεται, thus interrupting the instructions given by the prophet.” The “foolishness” of this plus is not, however, as evident as Stade makes it seem since the text flows naturally enough with the plus between the two commands – in fact, the problems are even greater if the plus is given at the end of the verse, as done by the rest of the manuscripts.

<sup>41</sup> The second person sg. αποστησεις is likely due to secondary harmonization towards the other singular forms in the verse.

<sup>42</sup> See also Klostermann, Bücher, 401, who retroverts והוא לא יסור.

<sup>43</sup> In the same vein, one may take into account the case at the end of 2Kgs 4,7 where the majority text of the LXX (but this time not L<sup>82-700!</sup>) has a plus of ἐλάω “the rest of [the] oil,” against the simple MT “the rest.” This plus may be a simple contextual explication, possibly originally even done by the translator. However, if the LXX version of the story in verses 4-6 is indeed the older one, this plus – or rather, its omission in the MT – could point in the same direction, i.e., the MT trying to omit small-scale logical incongruities from the text, since the LXX text of 2Kgs 4,7 now implies that the oil, or at least not all of it, was *not* sold. The wording of the MT, on the other hand, is somewhat vague and

rabbinic<sup>44</sup> viewpoint of the proto-MT, however, a faint *possibility* of such an interpretation would already have been seen as problematic, and thus in need of removal.<sup>45</sup> One may also take into account the further MT plus לָּ in verse 4, found in Greek only in the Hexaplaric witnesses, which is likely a secondary addition.<sup>46</sup> This plus of “all” may further emphasize the completeness of the action prophesied by Elisha, which is in line with the omission of the *L* plus and also shows that the MT could indeed have been interested in slightly revising this verse.

#### 2.4 Throwing the Flour: Who Is Doing What in 2Kgs 4,41?

A very minor textual difference can be found in 2Kgs 4,41, where Elisha speaks to his disciples after they have discovered that their soup is inedible. In MT Elisha tells them to bring flour, and proceeds to throw the flour in the cauldron: “And he said: ‘and bring flour.’ And he threw [it] into the cauldron” (וַיֹּאמֶר וַיִּקְחוּ-קֶמַח וַיִּשְׁלֹךְ אֶל-הַסִּיר).<sup>47</sup>

In the LXX, Targum Jonathan, and the Peshitta, however, the throwing of flour forms part of the order of Elisha: καὶ εἶπεν: λάβετε (\*קח) ἄλευρον καὶ ἐμβάλετε (\*וישליך) εἰς τὸν λέβητα, “And he said: ‘Take flour and throw it into the cauldron.’”<sup>48</sup> The one performing the miracle is thus not Elisha, but his disciples, to whom Elisha gives his prophetic orders. The difference is in one *wav* only – either tradition could therefore be simply

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unclear since it is not clear what “the rest” in fact refers to – the oil, or rather the money the wife will get from selling the oil.

<sup>44</sup> For the use of this term, see White Crawford, Tradition, 169.

<sup>45</sup> This very same tendency, to omit even the slightest possibility of a problematic *interpretation*, can also be seen in 2Kgs 2,14; 5,18-19; 8,11. See also the discussion in note 92.

<sup>46</sup> Similarly Stade, Books, 190 (“scribal expansion”).

<sup>47</sup> As such, the only apparently ungrammatical feature of the MT is the unnecessary *wav* in וַיִּקְחוּ. The singular וַיִּשְׁלֹךְ is somewhat unexpected, but understandable in the context. Similarly, for instance, Sweeney, Kings, 291, who adopts the LXX reading and according to whom the MT “makes little sense.”

<sup>48</sup> The manuscripts L<sup>82</sup>, 158, and 460 add, likely secondarily (Lucianic stylizing), a further explication καὶ ἐνέβαλον, “and they threw [it] in” after this. The *Vorlage* of the LXX, unlike the MT, also gives a role to Gehazi in this narrative, as LXX has after the second וַיֹּאמֶר the words Ελισαιε πρὸς Γιεζι τὸ παιδάριον (\* אלישע אל גיחזי הנער). It is likely that this addition of Gehazi (according to La<sup>M</sup> Gehazi is also the pupil sent to the field) to the story is secondary, albeit already in the LXX Hebrew *Vorlage*; see Stade, Books, 197.

due to accidental change.<sup>49</sup> However, especially in the light of the other evidence presented in this article, one may alternatively ask whether the lack of the *wav* in the MT could in fact go back to a *deliberate* omission of the plural, since this convenient minus of the MT now allows Elisha to personally perform one more miracle instead of simply giving instructions to his disciples.<sup>50</sup>

### 2.5 Does Elisha Allow Yahweh to be Worshipped in a Non-Yahwistic Temple (2Kgs 5,18)?

After being healed of leprosy according to the word of Elisha, the Aramean general Naaman makes a vow to never sacrifice to gods other than Yahweh ever again (2Kgs 5,17). However, in the next verse he asks Yahweh / Elisha for permission to worship in the temple of Rimmon when his king wishes Naaman to go with him. In 2Kgs 5,19 Elisha seemingly grants this wish.

MT	LXX Rahlfs	<i>L</i>
לְדָבָר הַזֶּה יִסְלַח יְהוָה לְעַבְדֶּךָ	καὶ ἰλάσσεται κύριος τῷ δούλῳ σου	καὶ περὶ τοῦ λόγου τούτου ἰλάσσεται μοι κύριος τῷ δούλῳ σου

<sup>49</sup> As argued by Stade, Books, 197. A somewhat similar case is that of 2Kgs 2,23 where Elisha is mocked (וַיִּקְלָצוּ) by young Bethelite boys. In *L* (= OG), however, there is a double reading καὶ ἐλίθαζον αὐτόν καὶ κατέπαιζον αὐτοῦ, “they *stoned him* and mocked him,” the first part going back to a slightly different *Vorlage* (\*ויסקלו). The difference may have come about through a copying mistake (metathesis), but as the meaning of the phrase changes from quite a drastic action of “stoning” to a much more lenient “mocking,” one may ask whether this difference could not also go back to a *deliberate* change. Accordingly, Cogan / Tadmor, Kings, 38, ask: “Is this addition a true doublet or rather an embellishment which sought to explain the prophet’s violent outburst against the children?” However, in the light of the evidence in this article, one could also reverse their argument – rather than *L* being “an embellishment,” the MT could have omitted the idea that the prophet was being *stoned*, a very grave punishment for idolatry in Deut 13,10 and 17,5. Furthermore, this would also make sense in the anti-Bethelite ideology of Kings: the Bethelite kids stoned a prophet they may have perceived as *false*; see Pakkala, Jeroboam’s Sin, 86-92, for these anti-Bethelite overtones in Kings.

<sup>50</sup> One may also wonder whether the apparently ungrammatical *wav* in וַיִּקְרָא is somehow linked to this lack of plural *wav* in the MT. The argument of Stade, Books, 197, for the secondary nature of the LXX is not very convincing: “The rendering of the Versions is due to the fact that this act was supposed to have been performed, not by the prophet himself, but by a ‘son of the prophets’ as minister of Elisha.” However, nowhere in the narrative is it explicated that the action “was supposed to have been performed” by either Elisha or his disciples.

<p>בְּבֹא אֲדָנִי בֵּית־רִמּוֹן לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת שָׁמָּה וְהוּא נִשְׁפָּן עַל־יָדַי וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתִי בֵּית רִמּוֹן בְּהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתִי</p> <p>בֵּית רִמּוֹן יְסֻח־נָא יְהוָה לְעִבְדְּךָ בְּדָבָר הַזֶּה:</p>	<p>ἐν τῷ εἰσπορεύεσθαι τὸν κύριόν μου εἰς οἶκον Ρεμμαν προσκυνῆσαι αὐτόν καὶ ἐπαναπαύσεται ἐπὶ τῆς χειρός μου καὶ προσανήσω (+ τῷ κυρίῳ 372) ἐν οἴκῳ Ρεμμαν ἐν τῷ προσκυνεῖν αὐτόν</p> <p>ἐν οἴκῳ Ρεμμαν καὶ ἰλάσεται δὴ κύριος τῷ δούλῳ σου ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τούτῳ</p>	<p>ἐν τῷ εἰσπορεύεσθαι τὸν κύριόν μου εἰς οἶκον Ρεμμαν προσκυνῆσαι ἐκεῖ, ὅτι αὐτός ἐπαναπαύσεται ἐπὶ τῆς χειρός μου. καὶ ἐν τῷ προσκυνεῖν αὐτόν εἰς οἶκον Ρεμμαν προσκυνήσω ἅμα αὐτῷ ἐγὼ κυρίῳ τῷ θεῷ μου</p> <p>καὶ ἰλάσεται μοι κύριος τῷ δούλῳ σου περὶ τοῦ λόγου τούτου</p>
<p>MT/Rahlfs: But (MT: concerning this) may Yahweh forgive for your servant, that when my lord goes to the house of Rimmon to bow down there, and he leans to my hand, and I shall bow down in the house of Rimmon, “as I bow (MT)/he bows (LXX) down” in the house of Rimmon. May Yahweh forgive your servant this thing?</p>	<p><i>L</i>: And concerning this word may the Lord forgive me, to your servant, that when my lord goes into the house of Rimmon to bow down there, <u>for</u> he leans on my hand. And <u>as he</u> bows down in the house of Rimmon, I shall bow down <u>at the same time to the Lord my God</u>. May Yahweh forgive your servant concerning this thing?</p>	

It has been clear for over a century that the text of the MT has somehow become corrupt with its strange repetition בֵּית רִמּוֹן בְּהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתִי בֵּית רִמּוֹן and its ungrammatical verbal form בְּהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתִי.<sup>51</sup> The majority of Greek witnesses have been harmonized with the MT’s text form. However, instead of the third mention of בֵּית רִמּוֹן, a curious text is found in *L*, ἅμα αὐτῷ ἐγὼ κυρίῳ τῷ θεῷ μου, “together with him I (will worship) the Lord, my God,” together with the swapping transposition of the two mentions of worshipping.<sup>52</sup> The few scholars who have noticed the peculiar form of *L* have universally deemed it secondary. Stade, for instance, comments on the reading of *L*: “S<sup>L</sup> improves on Naaman’s monotheism ... This is a correction of M, which entirely obliterates the point of Naaman’s statement.”<sup>53</sup> This kind of contextual harmonizing plus would indeed be something that *L*

<sup>51</sup> Some commentators emend the problematic MT with the help of the LXX; cf. Stade, Books, 201; Kittel, Bücher, 208.

<sup>52</sup> The *L* text reads thus: “and as he worships in the temple of Rimmon, together with him I will worship Yahweh my God.” On the “swapping” method of transposition, see Mäkipelto / Tekoniemi / Tucker, Transposition, 13.

<sup>53</sup> Stade, Books, 201. See also Stipp, Elischa, 304.

could easily create, and at least the nice Greek expression ἅμα αὐτῷ “together with him,” may indeed come from the reviser.<sup>54</sup>

However, rather than “entirely obliterating” the logic of the narrative, the plus of *L* in fact has a slightly different theological flavor from the rest of the traditions. In MT/LXX the main point of the story also concerns the action of Naaman – albeit reluctantly – worshipping a foreign (or rather, his native) god for practical reasons, despite his newly made vow. In *L*, as noted by the commentators, the monotheistic resolve of Naaman is “augmented,” since instead of prostrating himself to Rimmon he does so to Yahweh, his new god.<sup>55</sup> This “augmentation” would bring with it one theologically quite problematic concept, however, since the text of *L* implies that Yahweh could be worshipped (“bowing down”) outside of Jerusalem inside another god’s temple – certainly a grave violation of the laws found in Deut 12. In fact, a very similar MT omission can be found in 2Kgs 10,23 where the OG still preserves a text in which Jehu first orders all the priests of Yahweh to leave the temple of Baal before beginning the slaughter of the remaining Baalists inside.<sup>56</sup> This plus of the OG has been

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<sup>54</sup> Elsewhere in Samuel-Kings ἅμα is only found in 1Kgs 18,27 and 2Kgs 18,27, and in a somewhat different meaning. However, the word being found in the non-*kaige* section indicates that the OG translator could indeed have already used this expression here. This plus of ἅμα could also be due to the Lucianic reviser being confronted by two textual traditions, OG and *kaige*. Since now in *kaige* the text is transposed and ἐν τῷ προσκυνεῖν αὐτὸν is in fact repeated twice, it is possible that the Lucianic reviser saw it necessary to explicate that the action of worshipping indeed happened “at the same time with him,” ἅμα αὐτῷ. According to Brooke-McLean, the Ethiopian version also has here a plus *ego cum eo*, but this could similarly be a translational variant. Interestingly enough, a marginal reading in the Syrohexapla reads here *et non adorabo*, which is partly in line with the understanding of *L*.

<sup>55</sup> It also needs to be noted that a somewhat similar change takes place in the Jehu narrative 2Kgs 10,24 where in MT/LXX, and even *L*, Jehu is said to have actually sacrificed to Baal before the slaughter of Baal’s prophets. However, in the VL manuscript La<sup>115</sup>, likely the sole witness to the OG and the earliest form of the narrative altogether, the slaughter begins at the very moment Jehu steps into the temple, without his making any sacrifices. On this narrative change, see Trebolle Barrera, Latin, 17-36.

<sup>56</sup> The OG in 2Kgs 10,23 is found outside of both codex B and *L*, in the VL manuscript La<sup>115</sup> and the Greek manuscripts 247, *CI a*, 121, *f* 64’-488, 55, 71, 244, 245, 342, 372, and 554. For an analysis of this passage, see Pakkala, God’s Word, 234-237. Pakkala even argues that in 2Kgs 10,24 *L* may have in fact wanted to omit the same theologically problematic idea, namely that Yahweh would have



omitted in the MT – the Yahwistic priests were thus *not* worshipping Yahweh in the temple of Baal according to the MT. The same tendency could also be in play here.

In MT/LXX there is no such theological problem to be found since in the verse only Rimmon, in his own temple, is said to be worshipped by the two native Arameans. While it could be argued that *L*, on its own, wanted to avoid the idea that Elisha here gives Naaman permission to worship (or rather, pretend to worship), on special occasions, Rimmon as well,<sup>57</sup> it seems more likely that the proto-MT scribes would have seen it as much more problematic that Yahweh could have been syncretistically worshipped (perhaps even on an altar solely dedicated to him) in a foreign god's temple – and especially that the revered prophet Elisha would seem to so easily permit such an action.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, in the earlier stages of the Israelite religion and cult, the views of *L* (= OG) would have still been completely acceptable.<sup>59</sup> The now strange and clearly mangled textual form of the MT

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been worshipped in the same temple with Baal. If this is indeed the case, it would be quite unexpected for *L* to now do the exact opposite in 2Kgs 5,18.

<sup>57</sup> As argued by Barthélemy, *Critique*, 386. Even if this were the case, it would only show that the same theologizing tendency was followed by even later traditions such as *L*. Indeed, Josephus is also known for his similar tendency of enhancing the picture of Elisha; see Feldman, *Josephus' Portrait*, 1-28.

<sup>58</sup> On the basis of the revision of the Hannah stories in 1Sam 1, Aejmelaeus, *Samuel*, 16-17, argues that the (proto-)Masoretic revision, which is evidently late and missing from the OG version of the said chapter, was made due to the emerging sacredness / authoritativeness of Samuel-Kings: "I suggest that the motivation for the editorial reworking found in the MT was halakic. No one should take Hannah as her (or his) example and excuse their actions on the basis of the story found in the Scriptures." Of course, if there were theologically problematic views to be found in the text (such as Hannah, a woman, praying inside Yahweh's temple "in front of Yahweh"), a literal interpretation of the passage would become problematic – which would have triggered late revisions to the text. It is quite possible that this base tenet is at work here as well, especially since the deeds of revered prophets like Elisha would likely prove very influential when it came to interpretations of *halakhic* law. This verse, for instance, could have been used to answer the always quite relevant question "can Yahweh be revered in the temple of a foreign god (or anywhere other than Jerusalem, for that matter)?" The *L* text (~ OG) version could, of course, be used for an affirmative interpretation.

<sup>59</sup> As argued by Pakkala, *Monolatry*, 169, it is likely that such "intolerant" and monotheistic ideas are generally redactionally very late additions to the books of Kings. This case would thus go to show that this tendency was – as would be expected – being even more carefully reinforced by the proto-Masoretic, or proto-*rabbinic*, scribes. However, in the earlier editions, such as the *Vorlage* of

would also be much more understandable in this light since the omission and correction of the theologically problematic passage of *L* (possibly \* עמו ליהוה אלהי in Hebrew) would have resulted in a grammatically strange text, as is often the case (as seen in the case of 2Kgs 2,14 above and in 2Kgs 8,11; 13,21 below).

2.6 “And He Set until Shame” – What Exactly was Set? (2Kgs 8,11)

It has long been noted that the text of the MT in verse 2Kgs 8:11 is somewhat odd since the verb in the expression וַיִּשֶׂם עַד-בִּזְיוֹ, “and he put(?) until (he was) ashamed,” does not seem to refer to anything meaningful in the text.<sup>60</sup> It is also hard to say who the subject of the sentence is. The Greek tradition, on the other hand, has two different pluses accommodating this odd reading, one in *L*, 158, 460 (“and he put *before him the gifts*”), and another in 64’, 55, 71, 342, 372, and 554<sup>mg</sup> (“and he set *the gifts* until they were rotten”).<sup>61</sup>

MT	LXX Rahlfs	<i>L</i>
וַיִּשֶׂם אֶת-פָּנָיו	καὶ παρέστη τῷ προσώπῳ αὐτοῦ	καὶ ἔστη Ἀζαηλ κατὰ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ <sup>62</sup>

the OG, some of the earlier theological conceptions still remained in more subtle passages like this one.

<sup>60</sup> The וַיִּשֶׂם אֶת-פָּנָיו, understood as “and he fixed his gaze” or the like, while somewhat awkward (such a use of עמד with hiph. vocalization is unique and unusual in the Hebrew Bible), may still be accepted as proper Hebrew.

<sup>61</sup> This reading of manuscripts 64’, 55, 71, 342, 372, and 554<sup>mg</sup> appears to be supported also by La<sup>M</sup>: *et posita erant munera usque dum putrida fierent*. Judging by its translation technique, it seems likely that this second Greek plus (or rather, a faulty double reading/translation) comes from a Hexaplaric source since the equivalent σαπρί(ζω) ~ באש is found in Aquila, Symmachos, and Theodotion; see Reider / Turner, Index, 212-213. It is in any case significant to note that the plus τὰ δῶρα in this verse is not a Lucianic invention – and that this reading may have been found in a proto-MT Hebrew text even as late as the *Vorlage* of Aquila! Interestingly enough, the Peshitta reads only the last sentence in this verse: “And the prophet of God wept.”

<sup>62</sup> While the explication of the subject may be (though in this case not necessarily) due to recensional Lucianic tendencies, the κατὰ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ likely goes back to a Hebrew *Vorlage*, as the *kaige* text has also preserved the dative form τῷ προσώπῳ αὐτοῦ (לפניו\*) here. If the *Vorlage* were the text of the MT (אֶת-פָּנָיו), one would expect the accusative τὸ πρόσωπον here, utilized by both the *kaige* (2Sam 19,5; 2Kgs 20,2) and OG translator alike (1Kgs 8,14; 20,4). Indeed, the MT אֶת-פָּנָיו is now quite difficult to interpret, as it has to be taken as somehow the object of the verb וַיִּשֶׂם. Moreover, four Medieval Hebrew manuscripts read על instead of את, thus partly agreeing with the Greek text. It is possible that this change of preposition in the MT is a compensatory revision made with the

עָשָׂה וַיִּשְׁתָּחֲוֶה וַיִּשְׁתָּחֲוֶה וַיִּשְׁתָּחֲוֶה	καὶ ἔθηκεν ἕως αἰσχύνῃς καὶ ἔκλαυσεν ὁ ἄνθρωπος τοῦ θεοῦ	καὶ παρέθηκεν ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ τὰ δῶρα ἕως ἡσχύνετο <sup>63</sup> καὶ ἔκλαυσεν ὁ ἄνθρωπος τοῦ θεοῦ
αὐτοῦ] + καὶ ἐκεῖτο τὰ δῶρα εὗς οὐ ἐσαπρίσαν 64', 55, 71, 342, 372, and 554 <sup>mg</sup>		
MT/Rahlfs: And he stood his face, and put until (he was) ashamed. And the man of God wept.		L: And Hazael stood in front of him, and placed <u>before him gifts</u> until he was ashamed. And the man of God wept.

Many different attempts to explain the somewhat strange text of the MT have been made. The subject of verse 11a is already hard to deduce – some take this as Hazael,<sup>64</sup> others as Elisha.<sup>65</sup> It is quite often agreed that עָשָׂה should in fact be read as עָשָׂה, thus not deriving from the verbal root עָשָׂה, but עָשָׂה, “to be appalled/confused.”<sup>66</sup> Another interpretation is to take עָשָׂה as denoting that the facial “standing” (of either Elisha or Hazael) was somehow sustained for a long period of time.<sup>67</sup> Despite the many attempts, no scholarly consensus on the interpretation of the MT text has been reached. The textual evidence has only rarely been taken into account.

However, it has been noted by Schenker that there is in fact a considerable difference between the understanding of the MT and L. In the MT it is clear that Elisha stays as incorruptible as in 2Kgs 5,16 where he strictly denies the gifts of Naaman (“As Yahweh lives, before whom I stand, I will take nothing”). In L, however, this seems not to be the case since Hazael keeps laying his gifts before Elisha “until he was ashamed and wept.”<sup>68</sup> Indeed, in the narrative of the MT, Hazael now apparently takes with him gifts for nothing, since they are nowhere mentioned after verse 2Kgs 8,9. Of

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omission of the OG plus (see below), so that the one acting in the verse would be Elisha alone.

<sup>63</sup> The finite verbal form is the OG translation; cf. 2Kgs 2,17 for a similar understanding of the Hebrew עָשָׂה. The majority text attests a more literal *kaige* translation.

<sup>64</sup> Since the “man of God” is mentioned in verse 11b, the verbs before this would seemingly have someone other than Elisha as their subject; thus, for instance, Burney, Notes, 293; Stade, Books, 216; Gray, Kings, 478.

<sup>65</sup> Thus Montgomery, Commentary, 394; Hobbs, Kings, 95; Bähr, Books, 78-79.

<sup>66</sup> Originally suggested by Klostermann, Bücher, 416, and followed by Benzinger, Bücher, 145; Kittel, Bücher, 221; Šanda, Bücher, 68, and many others. This is also the understanding of the Vulgate reading *et conturbatus est*.

<sup>67</sup> Thus Cogan / Tadmor, Kings, 89-90.

<sup>68</sup> Schenker, Textgeschichte, 128-131. Thus, even if originally unmentioned, it is easy to see who the subjects in the verse are in this narrative form.

course, it is nowhere in *L* explicitly stated that Elisha actually *takes* the gifts, but since the earlier, vehement refusal of Elisha from 2Kgs 5,16 is now lacking here in 8,11, there nevertheless remains the possibility of the interpretation that Elisha indeed took the gifts of this to-be-king idolater. Since Gehazi was later punished with leprosy for taking a gift from Naaman (2Kgs 5,27), one does wonder whether a similar fate should face Elisha in the *L* text as well. It is therefore likely that the MT here deliberately removed even the slightest possibility of such an interpretation.<sup>69</sup> The narrative form of *L* (= OG, \*לפניו מנחה) is thus more original here.<sup>70</sup>

## 2.7 Elisha's Death and Burial (2Kgs 13,14-21)

There are two distinct phenomena to be assessed in the death narrative of Elisha: first, the position of the whole narrative in the Old Latin witness La<sup>115</sup> after 2Kgs 10,30 in the regnal narrative of Jehu; and second, the textual form of Elisha's burial narrative in 2Kgs 13,20-21.

### 2.7.1 Large-Scale Transposition in the Proto-MT

The position of Elisha's death narrative in La<sup>115</sup> between verses 2Kgs 10,30 and 31 is a little-known feature of this largely overlooked manuscript. It is likely that the story was found in this location in the Latin translator's (OG) exemplar, and that La<sup>115</sup>'s position of the story is in fact earlier than that of the MT.<sup>71</sup> The reason for this later transposition from the time of Jehu to that of Jehoash was also in this case ideological. While in the MT/LXX the prophecy of Elisha concerning the victories over Aram (2Kgs 13,15-19) is now completely and utterly fulfilled in the victories of Jehoash (2Kgs 13,25), in La<sup>115</sup>'s order the picture is very different – nothing is said of Jehu

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<sup>69</sup> One may also take into account here the *ketiv-qere* difference one verse earlier in 2Kgs 8,10, where the MT reads *ketiv* לֹא against the *qere* יָלַד, which is still found in the Septuagint (αὐτῷ) and even in multiple Medieval Masoretic manuscripts (Kennicott, Vetus, 1.160.224.246.249.250.251.253.270.271.375.659). The direction is the same here as in other cases – and especially in 2Kgs 4,41 – in this article: with a very slight and subtle change (which is practically merely orthographically meaningful!) an ideological problem nevertheless is mitigated, i.e., a contradiction between the words of Elisha (“surely you shall live”) and the actual outcome, the death of the king. Thus also Montgomery, Commentary, 393; and Gray, Kings, 476: “... an obvious scribal effort to make the first part of Elisha's statement agree with the prediction of the king's death.”

<sup>70</sup> Thus even Stade, Books, 216: “The correct interpretation is preserved in S<sup>L</sup>.” An accidental omission of לִפְנֵי מְנַחָה does not seem very likely here.

<sup>71</sup> Also, the text found in these verses seems to have been preserved in a more original state in La<sup>115</sup>; for an analysis, see Richelle, Testament, 11-87.

defeating the Arameans even three times. In fact, in 2Kgs 10,32-33 we are told that Hazael smote Israel on all fronts. It is exceedingly unlikely that a later reviser would deliberately transpose the narrative to such a strange place as found in La<sup>115</sup>, which almost implies that the prophecy of Elisha was in fact *false*.<sup>72</sup>

Table 2. Placement of Elisha’s death in OG, MT, and *kaige* editions of 2 Kings

OG (La <sup>115</sup> )	MT	<i>Kaige</i> -text (LXX)
Deuteronomistic notice (10,30)	Deuteronomistic notice (10,30)	Deuteronomistic notice (10,30)
<i>Elisha’s death (13,14-21)</i>		
Deuteronomistic condemnation (10,31)	Deuteronomistic condemnation (10,31)	Deuteronomistic condemnation (10,31)
Death of Jehu to reign of Jehoash (10,32-13,13)	Death of Jehu to reign of Jehoash (10,32-13,13)	Death of Jehu to reign of Jehoash (10,32-13,13)
	<i>Elisha’s death (13,14-21)</i>	<i>Elisha’s death (13,14-21)</i>

Moreover, it makes more sense for the story to be recounted in the near vicinity of all the other Elisha stories (in 2Kgs 2-8),<sup>73</sup> both narratologically and chronologically, since in the MT order we are to understand that Elisha was active only during the Omride dynasty, but after this apparently remained completely idle through the reigns of Jehu and Jehoash – that is, for at least 45 years.<sup>74</sup> The MT order also presupposes that both Hazael and Elisha lived quite lengthy lives, since Hazael ascends to the Aramean throne already during the reign of Joram of Israel and Elisha begins as the pupil of

<sup>72</sup> In 2Kgs 10,30 we are also told that “Yahweh spoke to Jehu,” which would make Jehu’s failure to defeat Aram even more exceptional (although in 2Kgs 10,32 it is also said that “the Lord started to cut off Israel”). However, as said by Elisha himself in 2Kgs 13,19, Israel would not have definitively won against Aram in any case since only three victories were promised. In the end these would thus come to naught, as shown by 2Kgs 10,32; similarly Richelle, Kings, 77. The situation is completely different in the MT where, after the Israelite victories in 2Kgs 13,25 and 14,28, practically nothing is said about Aram.

<sup>73</sup> Compare with the situation of the swapping of 1Kgs 20 and 21 in the OG. This transposition brings the Elijah narratives of 1Kgs 17-19 and 21 closer to one another.

<sup>74</sup> It should also be noted that in 2Kgs 9,1-3 Elisha sends a pupil to do the anointing in his stead. As he is said to be on his deathbed in the OG only a chapter later, one may ask: could Elisha already have been unable to go and anoint Jehu by himself?

Elijah already during the reign of Ahab.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, it is also possible in the OG chronology that the word of Yahweh in 1Kgs 19,17 (“who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay”) would not come true: as Athaliah, daughter of Omri / Ahab,<sup>76</sup> and Jehu reign simultaneously for seven years, it is in the OG chronology inevitable that Elisha dies during this time period, leaving thus an Omride Baalist on the throne of Judah, against the word of Yahweh. In the MT, both the Omrides and Baalists (and Jehu) have been dead for multiple decades when Elisha finally dies. This way the possible theological problem concerning Yahweh’s word could also be avoided in the MT.

This transposition also brought about a slight but very telling change in 2Kgs 13,5. In the MT it is said that Yahweh gave Israel a “savior” (מוֹשִׁיעַ) while the LXX (even in the B-text) reads σωτηρίαν “salvation/ victory” (\*ישועה/תשועה\*).<sup>77</sup> It is likely that the MT wanted to make a reference to Elisha (or Jehoash) as the “savior” of Israel with this slight change.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, Richelle has convincingly shown that there are multiple similar interconnected *compensatory revisions* and variants in 2Kgs 13 that all point to changes in the order and text of the MT.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> In the MT, Elisha would have thus worked as a prophet for at least 59 years (during the reigns of Ahazyah, Joram, Jehu, and Jehoahaz), not to mention the uncertain number of years he worked as a pupil of Elijah (and during the reign of Jehoash). It is not impossible that such longevity of this great prophet would have been deliberately promoted by the proto-MT revisers as well.

<sup>76</sup> In the Greek it is not completely certain whose daughter Athaliah is; see Schenker, *Textgeschichte*, 131-133.

<sup>77</sup> An accidental change between the two is remotely possible, but not exceedingly likely. Indeed, interestingly enough, the so-called *Samaritan Chronicle II* or *Sepher ha-Yamim* agrees with the LXX here by reading יְשׁוּעָה, likely showing characteristics of a text that lacked some of the very latest revisional proto-MT readings, as seems to sporadically be the case in its text. For an edition of this Samaritan text, see MacDonald, *Chronicle*, and for a discussion of some of the *Chronicle*’s textual characteristics in 1-2 Kings, see Tekoniemi, *Game*, 25-30.

<sup>78</sup> Thus Trebolle Barrera, *Histoire*, 340. The argument of Richelle, *Kings*, 79 (“... it is doubtful that the motivation for the transposition lies in this aspect. In fact, the pericope does not present Elisha as a “savior” at all.”), is not very convincing. While this is the case in the OG tradition, in the MT this saving tendency of Elisha and / or Jehoash becomes clearly evident with 2Kgs 13,23 (transposed here from 13,7+, as shown by *L*) and 13,25. However, the text of the MT has become somewhat ambiguous because of this change since the identity of this “savior” is not completely certain. As Jehoahaz, Jehoash, and Jeroboam II are all depicted as victorious kings, they could all warrant this epithet together with Elisha.

<sup>79</sup> Richelle, *Kings*, 62-81; Richelle, *Testament*, 11-103.

When talking about transpositions, it is furthermore important to note that a certain type of transposition seems to have been a recurrent device in the toolbox of the proto-MT redaction, namely, transposition via chronological change. Not only is the death narrative of Elisha transposed to the reign of Joash, but Elisha's succession narrative and the whole of 2Kgs 2 also seem to have been transposed – likely with the transposition of the Jehoshaphat narrative (see above) – by *swapping* it with the ascension narrative of Joram of Israel (MT 2Kgs 3,1-3), found in the OG in verses 1,18a-d.<sup>80</sup> As recounted above, this transposition was also motivated by ideological considerations and was achieved via chronological changes made to the time of the Omride dynasty. Moreover, in both of these cases the proto-MT reviser seems to have similarly slightly “misplaced” the Elisha narratives since both stories (2Kgs 2 and 13,14-21) are now found outside the regnal frames of either Judahite or Israelite kings, thus breaking the elementary narrative rules of Kings.<sup>81</sup> Whether this was done by accident or deliberately is hard to say, but, nevertheless, it is certainly a peculiar coincidence that both extraordinary phenomena in the MT are linked to the beginning and the end of the same prophet's narrative – especially when it is noted that the OG narrative does not break these narrative rules of Kings. Due to the use of this same rare editorial technique, it seems likely that both of these old cruxes of the scholarship of Kings are the product of one and the same late proto-MT reviser interested in the Elisha narratives.

### 2.7.2 Who Threw whom into Elisha's Grave in 2Kgs 13,21?

The MT text of the short burial narrative of Elisha in 2Kgs 13,20-21 holds many challenges. The ending phrase of verse 20, נָפַץ שָׁנָה, possibly to be translated as “a year having gone,” has already confused scholars for well over a century.<sup>82</sup> It is not completely clear how this phrase should be understood and translated in the context or what its narrative function is.<sup>83</sup> Possibly it should be understood as highlighting the miraculous powers of

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<sup>80</sup> Similarly Stade, Books, 181; Shenkel, Chronology, 89-91; Trebelle Barrera, Criticism, 95.

<sup>81</sup> In Kings, all narratives are usually given between the regnal beginning and ending formulas. Any text left outside these frames is therefore systematically suspect of being somehow secondary.

<sup>82</sup> See Stade, Books, 245; Kittel, Bücher, 259; Klostermann, Bücher, 439.

<sup>83</sup> See Tekoniemi, Readings, 9-10, for a discussion of this phrase. Chronologically speaking, if translated as “a year having gone,” this would mean that the miracle happened at least in the second year of Joash and the first year of Ahaziah. While it is possible that a proto-MT reviser saw this synchronism as somehow important, it is now hard to see why.

Elisha after his death: even “after one year” his mere bones were capable of miracles.<sup>84</sup> In any case, the fact that La<sup>115</sup> is lacking this mention makes the phrase exceedingly suspicious.

The real textual problems, however, begin with 2Kgs 13,21:

MT	LXX Rahlfs	<i>L</i>	La <sup>115</sup>
וַיְהִי הַסֵּם קִרְרִים	καὶ ἐγένετο αὐτῶν θαπτόντων	καὶ ἐγένετο αὐτῶν θαπτόντων	Et factum est cum sepellirent pirate
אִישׁ	τὸν ἄνδρα	ἄνθρωπον ἓνα, καὶ ἤγγισε τὸ πειρατήριον	hominem unum accesserunt
		αὐτοῖς	ad monumentum
וַיִּהְיוּ וַיֵּדוּ	καὶ ἰδοὺ εἶδον		
וַיִּזְלְזְלוּ וַיִּשְׁלִיכוּ	τὸν μονόζωνον καὶ ἔρριψαν	καὶ ἔρριψαν	et proiecerunt
אִישׁ הָאֶחָד בְּקִרְבּוֹ	τὸν ἄνδρα ἐν τῷ τάφῳ	τὸν ἄνδρα ἐν τῷ τάφῳ	hominem in monumentum
אֵלִישָׁע	Ελισαιε	Ελισαιε	helissei
		καὶ ἔφυγον.	et fugerunt
וַיָּלֶךְ וַיֵּגֶשׁ	καὶ ἐπορεύθη καὶ ἤψατο	καὶ ἦλθε καὶ ἤψατο	et adplicitus est
הָאִישׁ		ὁ ἀνὴρ ὁ θαπτόμενος	homo
בְּעֶצְמוֹתָיו אֵלִישָׁע	τῶν ὀστέων Ελισαιε	τῶν ὀστων Ελισαιε	ossibus helissei
וַיָּהִי	καὶ ἔζησεν	καὶ ἔζησε	et uixit homo
וַיָּקָם	καὶ ἀνέστη	καὶ ἔστη	et surrexit
עַל-	ἐπὶ	ἐπὶ	super
פְּרָגְלָיו׃	τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ	τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ	pedes suos
MT/Rahlfs: And it happened as they were burying the man; and behold: they saw the band. And they threw the man into the grave of Elisha. And he went. And the man touched the bones of Elisha, and he revived and rose on his feet.		<i>L</i> : And it happened as they were burying a certain man, that pirates approached them. And they threw the man into the grave of Elisha <u>and they fled</u> . And he went.	La <sup>115</sup> : And it happened, when <u>the pirates</u> were burying a certain man that they approached the grave, and threw the man in the grave of Elisha. <u>And they fled</u> .

<sup>84</sup> As argued by Montgomery, Commentary, 436; Schenker, Textgeschichte, 145.



	And the man touched the bones of Elisha, and he revived, and rose on his feet.	And the man came into contact with the bones of Elisha, and the man revived and rose on his feet.
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The subject in the MT, **הֵם**, is now quite ambiguous – who are “they” in this context? Grammatically “they” should be the Moabite bandits from the previous verse, but this interpretation becomes impossible with the mention of **וַיִּהְיוּ רְאִי** **וַתִּבְּהוּ** “and behold, *they* saw the bandits.” The subjects are thus probably implied to be a group of unidentified Israelites. The second strange reading of the MT, **וַיֵּלֶךְ** “and he went,” seems to have the corpse of the dead man as subject, which is of course quite impossible at this stage of the narrative.<sup>85</sup>

The Greek majority text has clearly been subjected to Hebraizing *kaige* revision, as seen in the translation equivalent of **וַיֵּלֶךְ** as *μονόζωνος* and also in its otherwise close adherence to the MT.<sup>86</sup> Indeed, *L*, together with La<sup>115</sup>, does not know of the surprising MT phrase **וַתִּבְּהוּ רְאִי** **וַיֵּלֶךְ**, likely telling of its *kaige* origins in the majority text. Before the (*kaige*) reading “he went” (*καὶ ἦλθε*) *L* seems to have a double reading *καὶ ἔφυγον* “they fled,” confirmed by La<sup>115</sup> as the OG text. *L* thus seems to give an amalgam of many different textual traditions in this verse (OG, *kaige*, Lucianic revision), as its subjects are even harder to assess than those of the MT.<sup>87</sup>

La<sup>115</sup>, however, seems to have a very different narratological understanding in this verse. It was not Israelites who implicitly buried their fellow man in the tomb of Elisha, but rather the Moabite pirates (*Et factum est cum sepellirent pirate hominem unum*) who first approached the tomb (*accesserunt ad monumentum*), threw in one of their men (*et proiecerunt hominem in monumentum helissei*), and finally fled (*et fugerunt*). It is then the dead pirate who is resurrected. It is quite unlikely that such a textual form would have been born from later “harmonization,” for instance, since the text is now quite awkward theologically – an impure foreign “pirate” is resurrected by touching the sacred bones of a revered prophet.<sup>88</sup> The Latin, likely attesting here the

<sup>85</sup> It is possible this is simply a copying mistake where the plural *wav* has been dropped; thus Montgomery, Commentary, 436.

<sup>86</sup> The equivalent *μονόζωνος* = **וַיֵּלֶךְ** is a well-known *kaige* feature; see McLay, Kaige, 131.

<sup>87</sup> In *L*, the subject of the action in verse 21a would seem to be the bandits if not for the strange plus *αὐτοῖς* (likely coming from the Hebrew **הֵם**), which makes it difficult to say who the subjects of the next verb, *ἐρριψαν*, are.

<sup>88</sup> Similarly Treballe Barrera, Textos, 12-16; Richelle, Testament, 84-86. Originally, of course, this may have been taken as *positive*: the power of Elisha /

OG, can hardly have evolved from the textual forms of the MT/LXX/L while the opposite is quite easy to demonstrate. Thus, once again, the strange syntax and peculiar narrative logic reveal that the text was later changed in the MT and that the OG edition preserves the older version of the narrative here, as yet unconcerned with the minute ideological details of the story.

### 3. The OG Readings and the Larger Elisha Narrative in 2 Kings

The story of Elisha includes (at least) one more peculiar feature. In 2Kgs 4,29, Elisha gives his staff to his pupil Gehazi – quite clearly in hopes of getting the job done with this action – who is however unable to perform a miracle with it (2Kgs 4,31). This failure of Elisha’s pupil has confused scholars for quite some time, and no apparent reason for the phenomenon has been found.<sup>89</sup> However, when this narrative is read not in the context of the MT, but of the more original OG edition, the story makes much more sense in the larger Elisha narrative. As already outlined in the succession narrative of 2Kgs 2,14, Elisha is clearly not capable or powerful enough as a “man of God” to perform miracles via proxy, and has to go resurrect the Shunemite woman’s son in person – and this woman(!) seems to be aware of this.<sup>90</sup> The failure of Gehazi, while naturally a failure of his own as the pupil of a prophet, is even more so a failure of his overconfident master, Elisha, who is once more reminded of the fact that he has not inherited the full the powers of his own master.<sup>91</sup> The picture of Elisha is therefore much more consistent in the LXX tradition.

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Yahweh is so immense that even a foreigner can be resurrected when touching the bones of the great prophet!

<sup>89</sup> The early rabbis were already seemingly perplexed by the unexpected failure of Gehazi; see Klein, Gehazi, 103-110.

<sup>90</sup> As noted by Brueggeman, Kings, 324: “The staff by itself could do nothing. Perhaps the woman knows this, for she refuses to leave the presence of the prophet” and Long, Kings, 57: “Her rhetorical questions in v. 28 rebuke Elisha, and, remarkably, imply to the reader that the man of God lacks more than merely God’s private revelation.” The comment of Sweeney, Kings, 291, is also quite telling of Elisha’s might (or lack thereof): “The staff is an instrument or symbol of the prophet’s power, much like the rods of Aaron and Moses (see Exod 7:8-13, 14-25; 17:1-7, 8-15; Num 20:1-13, etc.).”

<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, the whole narrative is possible solely because “the Lord had hidden” the Shunemite son’s death from Elisha (2Kgs 4,27). The Elisha cycle as a story of *recurrent failures* may also be seen in Elisha’s prophecy in 2Kgs 3,18-19 (“the Lord will give Moab into your hands”), which seems to come to naught in 2Kgs 3,27. There the Israelites flee, apparently because Mesha, the king of Moab, sacrifices his oldest son to his god(s) – which of course implies that this act and / or god would be more powerful than Elisha and his prophecy; see Cogan

It should also be noted that, just as with Elijah and Elisha, so too with Elisha and his pupil, the pupil does not surpass his master – quite the contrary, Gehazi is not only considered unworthy of the firstborn’s double share, but he ultimately becomes a leper (2Kgs 5,27). In the LXX tradition of the Elisha cycle, there is thus a clear declining trend to be seen in the prophetic line begun after Elijah, the greatest prophet of all time. His pupil, while powerful, does not truly succeed him, and, finally, the only named pupil of Elisha is not even worthy of being a prophet. The Elijah-Elisha cycle thus in a way becomes a tragedy (or a tragi-comedic farce), paralleling the fate of the kingdom of Israel – a quite rapid decline from the days of power during the Omride dynasty (Elijah) to those of the Jehuite dynasty (Elisha), when the once-mighty kingdom is slowly but surely rendered into an insignificant local power, a political leper waiting for its final end.

#### 4. Conclusions

In this study eight different textual cases (2Kgs 2,14; 3,14; 4,4.41; 5,18; 8,11; 13,14-21; 13,21) have been analyzed. In all these cases the textual tradition of the MT has been secondarily edited in order to enhance the depiction of Elisha by correcting small narratological incongruities and by making his depiction more blameless.<sup>92</sup> The OG edition was not yet subjected to this proto-MT revision. The study thus further confirms the assertion of Adrian Schenker that, as one of its distinct characteristics, the proto-MT edition was clearly interested in polishing the depiction of the prophets Elijah and Elisha.<sup>93</sup>

The changes can in all cases be classified as theologically / ideologically motivated corrections:

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/ Tadmor, Kings, 51-52. On the many attempts at trying to interpret this mysterious failure, see, e.g., Chisholm, *Israel’s Retreat*, 70-77.

<sup>92</sup> Methodologically speaking, it is important to note that while many, if not all, of the cases are not overtly problematic to the eye of an unsuspecting reader, all of them *can* be deemed to include some kind of (ideologically interpretable) challenge, as shown above. Furthermore, and more importantly, as there is unquestionable textual *documented evidence* in these passages of likely deliberate changes to the text, it becomes not only viable, but necessary, to ask the question: “what *could have been seen* as problematic here, and *by whom*?” Similar methodology, especially when it comes to the “proto-Rabbinic” MT text, has also been aptly emphasized by Aejmelaeus (see note 47).

<sup>93</sup> Schenker, *Textgeschichte*, 175-176. The MT also seems to be interested in changing the depictions of some characters elsewhere – most notably the Israelite king Ahab is made to be more evil than in the LXX edition; see Hugo, *Visages*, 326-367.

- In 2Kgs 2,14 a proto-MT editor wanted to omit a mention of Elisha's failure to perform a miracle and the fact that Elisha did not inherit the powers of his Elijah.
- In 2Kgs 3,14 the problem of Elisha revering an evil Omride king, Ahazyah, was solved in the proto-MT by changing the king to the pious Jehoshaphat through an additional change to the chronological framework.
- In 2Kgs 4,4 the OG promise of Elisha that the oil of the widow would not be exhausted was omitted in the proto-MT since this is indeed what is said to happen in 2Kgs 4,6.
- In 2Kgs 4,41 the MT may have changed the original plural agent of the text to a singular, thus having Elisha personally perform one more miracle.
- In 2Kgs 5,18 the original plea of Naaman to worship Yahweh in the temple of the Aramean god Rimmon was changed in the proto-MT to a plea to worship Rimmon in his own temple.
- In 2Kgs 8,11 the possible interpretation that Elisha takes gifts from Hazael was negated in the proto-MT via omission of the mention of Hazael laying gifts before Elisha.
- In 2Kgs 13,14-21 Elisha's death narrative was transposed in the proto-MT from the Jehu narrative to that of Joash to make the prophecy of Elisha better come true. Also, the original burial narrative's awkward idea in 2Kgs 13,21 that a Moabite bandit would have been resurrected by touching the bones of Elisha was "solved" by changing the subjects of the text, so that it is no longer completely clear in the MT who was thrown into Elisha's tomb, and by whom.

The results of this study also have larger repercussions, not only for the study of the Elijah-Elisha cycle(s) as a whole, but for the methodology of *redaction criticism*, as well. It is quite clear that without the textual material studied in this article, for instance, we would likely never have suspected these particular verses and textual units of containing a very late, and equally subtle, proto-MT revision.<sup>94</sup> In fact, since in six out of eight cases

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<sup>94</sup> Such a minor change as a plural to a singular in 2Kgs 4,41 would especially be, even when a possible theologically motivated redaction could be shown, a characteristic easily deemed to be simply accidental. Thus, the comment of Stipp, Example, 317, made on the basis of the much clearer situation of Jeremiah, is especially noteworthy: "The *Sondergut* [of the MT edition] challenges overly optimistic attitudes as to the power of our tools for uncovering the history of biblical books. If we did not have an alternative text type permitting us to reconstruct the common ancestor, we would be utterly incapable of doing so." Any and all of the changes noted in this article would have hardly – and indeed

the changes have happened, at least to some degree, via *omissions*, without documented evidence we would be utterly unable to reconstruct the original text – even if in cases such as 2Kgs 8,11 we could be fairly certain that *something* must have dropped out of the text.

Therefore, what I would consider to be the most important next step to be taken in the joint text-/literary-critical scholarship – perhaps more aptly termed “text-historical research”<sup>95</sup> – is the systematic study and comparison of the two main editions in our possession, the MT and the LXX, more or less in the manner done in this study. Only after the possible tendencies / large-scale revisions affecting these two have been identified – together with the establishment of the *earliest text attainable* – should scholars restart the redactional study of the texts. It is more than likely that our current understanding of the literary layers (for instance the Nomistic redaction[s]) and their different ideological tendencies will become more precise after a text-critical study, as shown by the pioneering work of Stipp on the book of Jeremiah.

### Summary

The MT reflects in 2 Kings a text form that has in at least eight different instances (2Kgs 2,14; 3,14; 4,4.41; 5,18; 8,11; 13,14–21; 13,21) been subjected to a slight but noteworthy revision, interested in an ideologically more orthodox depiction of the prophet Elisha. This revision is lacking in the Old Greek edition. The more original readings of the OG indicate that, unlike in the Masoretic version, the original Elisha narrative was closer to a tragedy than a story of insuperable prophetic prowess.

### Zusammenfassung

Der MT spiegelt in 2 Könige eine Textform, die mindestens in acht verschiedenen Fällen (Versen 2:14; 3:14; 4: 4, 41; 5:18; 8:11; 13: 14-21, 21) einer leichten, aber bemerkenswerten Überarbeitung unterzogen worden ist. Diese ideologische Überarbeitung von proto-masoretischen Schreibern interessiert sich für eine orthodoxere Darstellung des Propheten Elisa. Die Überarbeitung fehlt in der altgriechischen Ausgabe. Die originelleren Lesarten der altgriechischen Texte zeigen, dass die ursprüngliche Elisa-Erzählung eher einer Tragödie als einer Geschichte spektakulärem prophetischem Können entsprach.

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have not – been proposed on the basis of purely literary or redaction critical methodology.

<sup>95</sup> See Mäkipelto, Editing, 296-298, and Tekoniemi, Game, 5-13, for the term.

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